

# SPORTS



## Hill's first arena used natural ice

The year 1923 was a momentous one.

Sir Frederick Banting was awarded the Nobel Prize for discovering insulin; Foster Hewitt broadcast the world's first hockey game; and Richmond Hill got a brand new arena.

A great year.

It was started in 1922 when town council — comprising N. Batty, David Hill, J. Lunau, J. Monkman, Reeve T. H. Trench — saw the need for a skating arena and initiated efforts to have one erected.

The ratepayers were asked to vote on the expenditure of \$12,000 to construct the arena. They approved it October 7 by 63 to 32 majority. A debenture bylaw was passed for \$12,000 over 15 years at a rate of six per cent.

Construction was started in the spring of 1923 and completed by the fall.

And what a smashing arena it was.

It was a gable-roofed structure with metal walls and the main supports were 10' by 10' and made of British Columbia fir.

The service area was one level with two dressing rooms and ticket booth plus two washrooms. It was, of course, a natural ice rink with a playing surface measuring 160' by 65'.

The arena was operated by The Town and was used extensively for lacrosse. There was pleasure skating but little or no recreational hockey.

It was used more extensively for intermediate and midget OMHA teams after 1943 but playing time was limited as the winters became milder.

Wilfred Booth ran the arena for the Town in the later years and was

known to all as "General Booth".

Big things started to happen in 1954 when artificial ice machinery was installed.

The cost of the installation was paid through canvassing the public and the sale of debentures at \$10 and \$20 with an interest rate of 3 per cent.

A group of interested citizens handled the scheme and, as a result, became the Richmond Hill Arena Association. They've been operating the arena ever since.

Present Arena Administrator Ed Sackfield compiled a brief history of the arena noting that he was unable to find who the first manager of the arena was but it was either Jim Lee or Joe Boyer, one first, the other second, but neither stayed long.

"Finally a man named Mack McDermott was hired in 1956 with fourth class engineer papers that were needed at that time and he stayed until his death in 1962.

"William Mabbett took over and stayed until 1966. These men all operated by themselves with the odd part-time help. Most ice-cleaning was done by interested community-minded persons using shovels."

Continues Sackfield:

"The arena was used extensively by the minor hockey association from its formation in 1957 of which the first president was H. T. Mills. Pleasure skating was held each Saturday and the Toronto Hockey League used it one night a week."

The old arena's lonely vigil ended in 1967 when the new addition was built at a final cost of \$387,000.

It was a long way from 1923 and the \$12,000 it took to build the first arena.

The year was 1932 and lacrosse, not hockey, was king in Richmond Hill. These members of the Richmond Hill Young Canadians had just won the Tri-County championship and the following year would win the Ontario title. Front row, left to right, are: H. Weis, Fred Armstrong, J. Johnson, E. White, C. Miller, C. Weiss, Ken Blanchard. Centre, Jacks, J.

Barton, Clark, W. Weis, J. Smith, B. Middleton, K. Kingdon, C. Rowntree. Back row, M. Bainen, C. Proctor, S. Young, Al White, A. Harding, Alf Stong, J. Miller, Red Aikens. Not in the photo but members of the Ontario championship team were Mike Miller, Ollie Barrett, Bruce Cordick, Jack Hart, Vic Orr. Perc Hill was treasurer and manager.

### Packed 'em in

## In the days when Lacrosse was king

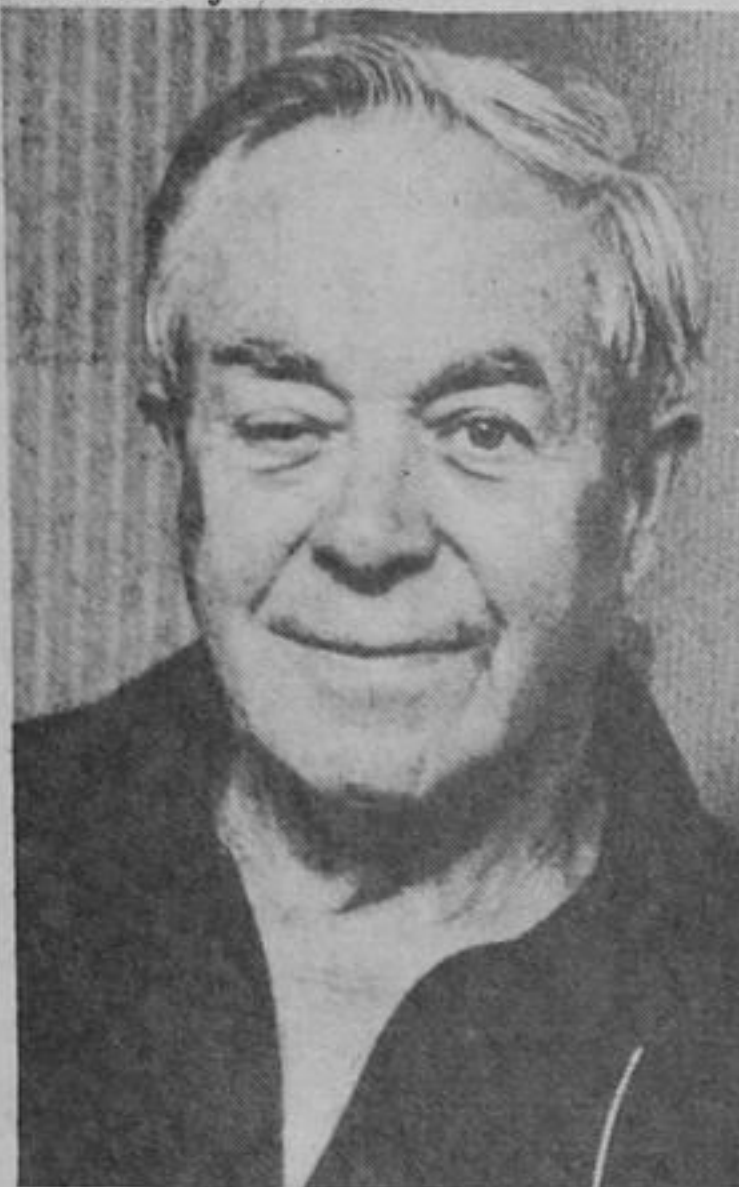
Do you remember when lacrosse was king in Richmond Hill?

When fans used to "hang from the rafters" at the old local arena to see their favorite stars?

Al White remembers it well. Al, who was employed at the Richmond Hill Town office for a number of years, is 70 now but he still recalls the lacrosse teams of 1930-31-32 and 33 who "used to pack them in".

"I played with the team but our big star was my brother, Eric 'Rusty' White," he said. "Rusty went on to play with Fergus and after he left, the team just sort of broke up. He was the linch-pin."

Rusty got lured away to Fergus by an offer too good to turn down in the depression-era of the 1930's. A job offer.



AL WHITE

"Of course there was a lot of unemployment in those days," said White. "I had a job at a gas station but not everyone was so lucky. You went where your job was."

It was an era where you played lacrosse "just for the fun of it, there was no money in it. And it was rough, very rough in those days."

"We didn't have helmets or pads or face-guards then and you felt the whacks when they came your way and they came often," he said.

The team was known as the "Young Canadians" and some familiar names were stalwarts in the line-up:

The late Fred "Dempsey" Armstrong, a former councillor of Woodbridge, was "a power house on the team and he was rough," said White. "You couldn't go by Fred without taking a whack somewhere."

Others included the late Alf Stong, former fire chief of Richmond Hill, "who went into replace Charlie Rountree in goal when he was hit in the eye and he turned out to be terrific in the nets."

Also on the team were Dave Middleton, Jack Johnson, John Miller, Red Aitken, Cal Miller, Ken Blanchard, Elmore Pug, Steve Young and Charlie Wiss.

"We played in a league with Aurora, Brampton, Orillia and Alliston," said White.

Their big year came in 1933 when they won the Ontario Intermediate Lacrosse championship in spectacular fashion.

"We went against Fergus in a two-game total goals to count series," said White.

"The first game was in Fergus on a board floor. We were used to playing on dirt in The Hill. We lost the game by 12 goals."

"We came back to Richmond Hill and beat them by 14 goals to take the title. What a night that was. The arena was packed."

White's playing days ended soon after that and his only other brief fling at lacrosse came in the 1940's when Richmond Hill had another lacrosse team.

"I was talked into coming out and coaching the team," he said. "But I got whacked in the head by my own player by mistake and I decided that was enough lacrosse for me."

Incidentally, the favorite

### Skating costs

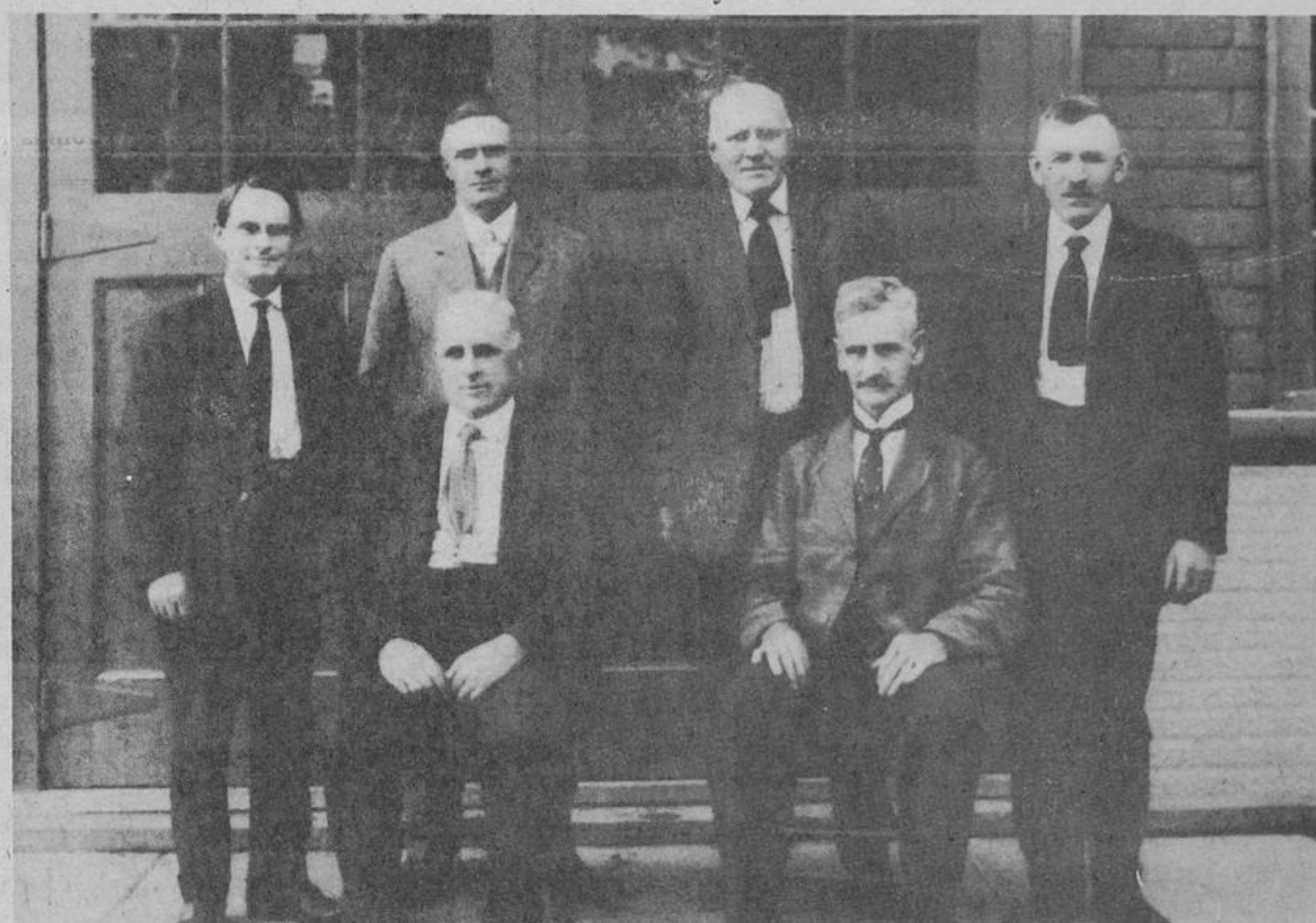
The Council decided to make the charges for skating in the rink as follows: adults 15 cents, children 10 cents on evenings without a band, a general fee of 15 cents on band nights.

For use of rink for private parties or hockey matches \$8. Hockey practice \$1 per hour, once a week free for children under 10 years.

— The Liberal, December 18, 1919.

eating place for the players after the game in the early 30's was the "Rustic Inn" located in the heart of downtown Richmond Hill.

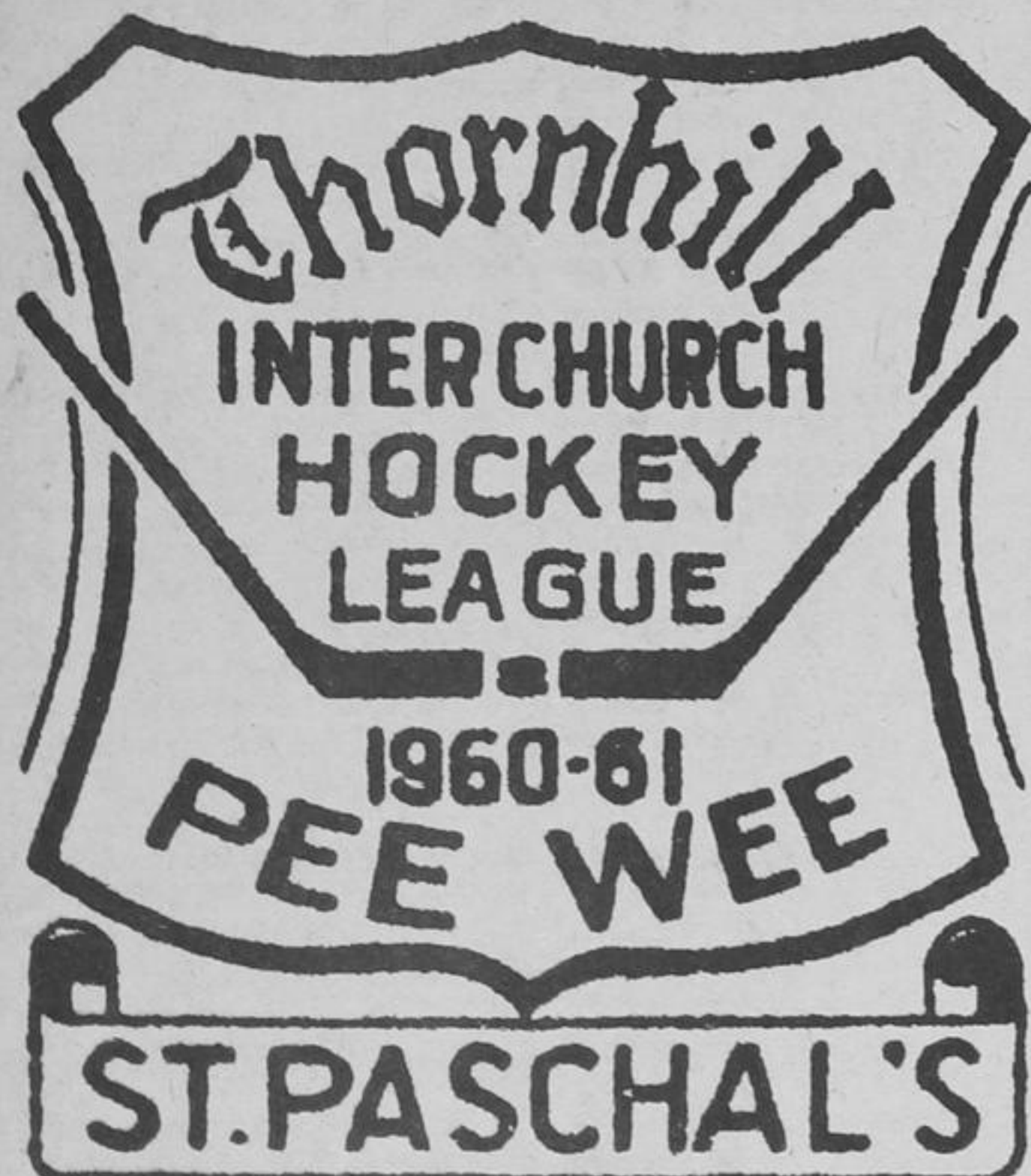
"It was really an ice cream parlor," said White. "It was the best place to eat in town at the time."



Gala occasion

It was the day of days way back in 1923 when Richmond Hill got its new arena. On hand for the grand opening were the above members of council. Standing, left to right, N. Batty, David Hill, J. Lunau, and J. Monkman. Seated, Reeve T. H. Trench and Clerk, A. J. Hume.

## Thornhill minor hockey players required to attend Sunday School



First league champions

Just imagine having to go to Sunday School before being eligible to play minor hockey these days?

That was the requirement in Thornhill not so very long ago in 1960 when the now Thornhill Community Minor Hockey League was formed.

"It was originally called the Thornhill Church League," said Bob Sherwood who is presently president of house league minor hockey. "It was called that simply because it was the churches who sponsored the teams. They were the predominant organizations in the community at that time."

Sherwood recalls that "in order to play hockey youngsters were required to attend Sunday School on a regular basis. In fact, the minister of the particular church team was required to sign the registration card to make sure the youngster was eligible."

A pause. "After a while the ministers tended to sign the cards pretty quickly without looking too closely."

You had to put on your travelling shoes to play minor

hockey in Thornhill in those early days of minor hockey. There was no Thornhill Community Centre and wouldn't be until 1974.

The games were played at Aurora in the beginning and later on at Doublerrink Arenas.

The league comprised the following churches: St. Paschals Catholic Church, St. Luke's Catholic Church, Holy Trinity Anglican, Thornhill United, Thornhill Presbyterian.

Who was the first big winner? An old clipping from The Liberal tells the story:

"Sparked by a three-goal effort by Captain Charlie McAffery, St. Paschals managed to outlast Thornhill United by a 4-3 margin to win the 1961 championship of the Thornhill Church League Peewee division.

"Frankie Grieco tallied the other goal. Terry Tamblin played brilliantly for Coach Ron Bagg's United Church team who were thwarted time and time again by the steady netminding of Johnny Bolger.

"St. Paschals earned their right to the championship game by

a thrilling come-back victory over St. Lukes.

"Trailing by two goals and facing elimination, coach Al Collins' crew battled back to take a 4-3 sudden-death game.

"McAffery hit twice for the winners with Tony Tackerly and Grieco notching the others. Mike Deacon and Danny Sloane were defense stars for the winners. Scoring for St. Lukes were Mike Lipp and Raymond Wenjes.

"Following the final games all teams and fathers were party with a hot dog and donut party at Holy Trinity Anglican Church where crests were presented to each boy in the league."

The article concludes:

"The Thornhill Church League was formed through the co-operation of Lloyd Davis and Don Macdonnell and saw games played every Monday night at Aurora from December through March.

"Coaches and managers included Ian Ross and Bob Law of Holy Trinity, Ron Bagg and Stew Hepburn of Thornhill United, Lou

Roman, Jack Flanagan and V. Trudell of St. Lukes and Al Collins and Don Macdonnell of St. Paschals.

"It is hoped that through expansion several more Thornhill and district churches will be added to the league for next season.

"The only qualification for a player is that he attends church regularly and likes to play hockey."

That expansion happened and today the Thornhill Minor Hockey League contains some 950 youngsters and 70 teams.

And you don't have to go to church regularly.

The founding executive in 1960-61 were: Lloyd Davis, president; Don Macdonnell, vice-president; Lou Ronan, treasurer; Lloyd Elvidge, Art Crawford, Ed Windsor and Jack Flanagan.

Those involved from almost the beginning and still involved are president Sherwood and Fred Disera. Sherwood has been president since 1973-74. Disera was president in 1972-73.